

Theory of social justice applied in hong kong



Apply the theory of social justice proposed by John Rawls to analyze the social and economic system of Hong Kong and assess whether the system in Hong Kong meets the basic principles proposed by John Rawls. Introduction In this world of high income and social disparity between countries, cities, or even within the domestic territory, social justice seems remote and unachievable. To John Rawls, however, social justice is in fact realistically utopian and it is achievable. The most influential theory that he proposed as well as the theory that he is primarily known for, is his theory of Justice as Fairness.

In his theory, a society where social justice is done, should consist of free and equal persons. The citizens should possess political and personal liberties, enjoy equal opportunity and cooperative arrangements that benefit the more and the less advantaged members of society. Thus, according to John Rawls, individuals are regarded as equal and their society is considered as a fair system as long as they are cooperating with each other to make life better off, from one generation to the next. Two fundamental principles, the Equal Liberty Principle and Difference Principle are derived from John Rawls' theory of social justice. The two basic principles, which represent the core value of John Rawls' theory of social justice, serve as the tool to evaluate Hong Kong's social justice and fairness.

The social and economic system of Hong Kong In Equal Liberty Principle, ' each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic liberties which is compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for all. According to John Rawls, these basic liberties are of overriding importance and should always be given priority. These basic liberties include namely

freedom of thought, liberty of conscience, political liberties, freedom of association, freedoms specified by the liberty and integrity of the person as well as other rights and liberties covered by the rule of law. Basically, in Hong Kong, a special administrative region of China, all of the aforementioned basic rights and liberties are protected by Basic Law.

As mentioned by John Rawls, liberty of conscience is practiced by freedom of thought and freedom of assembly. The Basic Law in Hong Kong has empowered Hong Kong citizens the aforementioned rights. For example, protests and demonstration are allowed in Hong Kong despite the chaos and riots caused in society sometimes. This echoes John Rawls' proposition of 'each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override'. Hong Kong citizens' basic liberties of thought and assembly are respected and protected even sometimes that they may harm the social order. In this regard, Hong Kong citizens are guaranteed the liberty of associate with other like-minded citizens and the liberty of conscience of the Equal Liberty Principle proposed by John Rawls' can be met.

According to John Rawls, the liberty of conscience also means the freedom of religion. Hong Kong has always been proud of her interlace and multitude of different cultures and religions. To name but a few, Christianity, Buddhism, Muslim, Indus and so forth are the religions found in Hong Kong. Even Falun Dafa, a religion that has already been banned in Mainland China, can still be found in Hong Kong.

The evangelism of Falun Dafa has not been interfered by the Hong Kong government. Freedoms specified by the liberty and integrity of the person, as explained by John Rawls, include freedom from slavery and serfdom and freedom of movement and choice regarding occupation. As a modern city, Hong Kong has long abolished slavery and serfdom system. Freedom of movement is also empowered to Hong Kong citizens. As stated in Basic Law, Hong Kong residents have the freedom to travel and to enter or leave the region. This attribute has made Hong Kong a regional transportation and financial hub.

Evaluating the freedom of choice of occupation, Hong Kong citizens, regardless of their sex, race, and age are free to choose their occupation. As some kinds of human instincts, discrimination such as racial and sex discrimination are inevitable in every society in the world. In Hong Kong, many females are working as the top management of large corporations, and even in the government. Retraining programs are also provided to the older or unskilled workers to help them regain competitive edge and hence enjoy a great choice of occupations. Among all, political freedom is of particular importance in John Rawls' principle of Equal Liberty because it poses influence on the enactment of laws which can restructure the society and social order to a certain extent. As proposed by John Rawls in his theory, 'everyone should hold a fair opportunity to hold political office and to influence the outcome of political decisions.

' Political liberties, according to John Rawls, also require representative democratic institutions and freedom of speech and press. Hong Kong adopts a multi-party system. Though there is no legislation for political parties in <https://assignbuster.com/theory-of-social-justice-applied-in-hong-kong/>

Hong Kong, there are still a multitude of political parties and groups by registering as limited companies or societies such as DAB, Democratic Party, Liberal Party, and Civic Party, to name but a few. The different parties are adopting different stances, such as pro-Beijing and pro-government, with some of the stances even being contradictory.

The political parties are also independent bodies, they are neither government- regulated nor controlled by huge and concentrated private economical or social powers. This has greatly enhanced the political liberty and diversity in Hong Kong and different voices can be heard. Half of the seats of the Legislative Council, which is an independent body responsible for the evaluation and enactment of laws, are elected by universal suffrage. This can coincide with John Rawls' proposition of ' open to everyone on a basis of rough equality' because the fair value for the political liberties which is essential to motivate the passing of just laws is guaranteed.

In spite of the fact that the Chief Executive election has always been excoriated as " small circle election", the successful attempt of Alan Leong managing to become an eligible candidate and to compete with Donald Tsang has marked the milestone of Hong Kong's democracy progressions. The Basic Law has also promised universal suffrage for all elections in a not-too-distant future. In John Rawls' theory of social justice, he included ' the right to hold and to have the exclusive use of personal property' as another basic liberty of people. which serves as the basis for the sense of personal independence and self-respect. From an economic point of view, Hong Kong has been ranked as the freest economy in the world for the 13th consecutive year.

The laissez-faire system and positive non-intervention from government, along with a simple tax system and a sound legal system of Hong Kong have attracted innumerable investors to Hong Kong. Though the investors have to pay the profits tax, they exercise full and exclusive ownership of their investment in Hong Kong. However, on the other hand, Hong Kong is also ranked as 17th in the countries with greatest inequality, only after some third world countries. In another fundamental principle of the theory of justice of John Rawls' the Difference Principle, social and economic inequalities can be justified as long as the following two conditions are met. Firstly, the inequalities are arranged to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and secondly, are attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

The income disparity in Hong Kong is mainly contributed by the tycoons such as Lee Ka Shing who is ranked as the 10th richest in the world. The vast majority of Hong Kong's population is the low-income group and poverty is an ever-deteriorating problem in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong government has allocated a certain amount of resources in its social welfare services such as the Social Security Assistance Scheme for the underprivileged and the Old Age Allowance for the elderly. Affordable medical care services are also offered to the needy. However, the income inequality in Hong Kong fails to meet the Difference Principle and cannot be justified by these basic social welfare schemes which only offer the basic rights and welfare for people.

John Rawls proposes that we should merit those with special skills, responsibilities or burdens. Approach of making life better off for those who are already well off but neglect those who are already disadvantaged, or

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even making their lives worse should be prohibited. When compared to the amount spent in the salary increment of civil servants, which cost the government billions, the amount spent in social welfare is incomparable. Collusion between the government and the wealthy and influential tycoons in Hong Kong is often condemned by the public. For example, one major reason for not practicing the minimum wage scheme which can protect the worse-off population of Hong Kong is to protect the interest of the tycoons as the scheme will increase their operating costs significantly.

Though social justice in economic sense still need to be improved in Hong Kong, the political liberty, which empowers the public the power to influence political decisions has deferred the problem from deteriorating. For instance, not long ago, the proposal of Goods and Services tax, a recessive tax that will further widen the gap between the rich and poor, was put aside. It is the collective power of the public whose voices can be heard by the government. Conclusion In general, the social and economic system in Hong Kong has managed to meet the principles of John Rawls to a large extent. Social justice can basically be done in Hong Kong as Hong Kong has long enjoyed high degree of freedom and autonomy.

However, it is undeniable that after the handover of Hong Kong to China, the freedom and autonomy have been intervened and hurt to a certain extent. For example, the proposal of Article 23 and the arrest of Ching Cheong have demonstrated the increase intervention of Mainland China to Hong Kong. Looking at the bigger picture, however, with the free and compulsory 9-year education which makes the future generation of Hong Kong more educated,

more aware of their own rights and liberties, I believe that Hong Kong is on the right track to a just society.